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ABSTRACT

Uses made of telemedia by various governmental agencies in Virginia in carrying out their functions are reviewed, and potentials for use offered by current technology are explored. The predominant uses for radio and television by those state agencies that have used telemedia are to distribute public service announcements (PSA's). Scripts, slides, and ITV programs have also been acquired by/for state agencies; most of these materials have been designedand produced by commercial sources under contract. Problems involved in contracting for services with vendors--i.e., public relations and advisory firms, public and commercial broadcasting stations, program production services, and commercial equipment vendors--are indicated, as well as a lack of standard procedures for administering funds for such contracts. It is concluded that the state's greatest weakness in not making greater use of available technologies has been due to a lack of information rather than an absence of technology, and several innovative uses of telemedia in other states are cited as examples of the potential that could be tapped by state agencies in Virginia. (RAO)

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS STUDY COMMISSION

"STATE AGENCY USES OF TELEMEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN VIRGINIA"

AUGUST 23, 1979

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Some of the telecommunications technologies have application beyond broadcast instructional television (and radio) in meeting the service delivery needs of State agencies and institutions. Various governmental agencies in Virginia make some use of telemedia in carrying out their functions. The potential for use offered by current technology seems to far outweigh the actual level of use made at this time.

Types of Telemedia Use in Virginia Governmental Agencies

Of the State agencies that have used telemedia, the predominant uses for radio and television are to distribute public service announcements (PSA's). Scripts, slides, and ITV programs have also been acquired by/for State agencies. Very little of the design and production associated with the satisfaction of these needs has been done by the State itself. Most has been accomplished through contracts with commercial sources.

On a very cursory basis, several State agencies were asked about their recent telemedia use. Of the units queried, fifteen different services were used - most only two times in the recent past; only one, ITV programming, was used extensively. The fifteen kinds of telemedia use include:

ITFS - Instructional Television Fixed Services
CATV
PSA's - TV
PSA's - Radio
PSA's - Film
Radio Spots
Film
TV Spots

Broadcast Time
Radio Dubs
TV Dubs
Script Preparation
ITV Program
Broadcast Time
Slides

Some other uses of telemedia technology have been demonstrated in Virginia. For instance, the Center for Excellence, Inc. has experimented with the use of two-way instruction. Also, the Center for Excellence and Virginia Voice are involved in serving the needs of Virginia's blind population. This is done through the use of SCA. CenTeX is also working with the deaf combining SCA with teletype.

Administering Methods of Telemedia Use

Contracting services and equipment is taking place with a variety of vendors. Public relations and advertising firms, public broadcasting stations (television and radio), commercial broadcasting stations, program production services, and commercial equipment vendors are all used. (It should be noted that these sources have not been listed by frequency of use.) There has been some contracting among the State agencies: the major lack of use of these resources is the result of an apparent lack of knowledge of who has what equipment and expertise.

The agencies at this time are lacking a set of guidelines to assist in contracting for services. Agencies who are becoming aware of VPTC as a potential resource are increasingly contacting them. However, the VPTC is suffering from a low level of visibility and not all agencies are aware of the services VPTC has to offer.

Many of the agencies view VPTC as one of the final steps in the contracting process. VPTC exists to approve or reject contracts. They do not view VPTC as potential consultants. This problem exists for a couple of reasons identified by the agencies; first, they are unaware that VPTC can and is willing to do consulting work and, too, some of the agencies cite poor past experience and feel the less contact the better. On the other side, there are agencies which are content with the treatment and decisions which were made and feel VPTC provided a service to them and the State.

Agencies, especially when using out-of-state funds, are involved in the direct contracting of services. In some cases, depending upon the agency, the vendor advises the agency what their needs are and which equipment is best suited for the agency's needs.

Problems in Using Telemedia by State Agencies

One problem in trying to monitor all of the State agency/institution contracts, besides the workload, is there is no law applicable to all media which requires agencies to send their budgets through the VPTC. The closest approximation is in the Appropriations Act §4-9.02:

> "No State agency shall expend any public funds for the production of motion picture films or programs for television transmission, or for the operation of television or radio transmission facilities, without prior written approval of the Governor, except for elementary-secondary education by authority of the Virginia Public Telecommunications Council."

At one time, this piece of legislation may have served as a useful mechanism in facilitating the coordination of statewide

telemedia purchasing. Now the potential cost savings to the State are limited by the lack of breadth of §4-9.02. It does not encompass all of the telemedia technologies which have been developed.

Another problem with the law is found in the interpretation of "public funds." There is a view that if the funds are obtained from sources other than the Commonwealth, the agency is under no obligation to have their contracts approved. This practice results in the purchasing of equipment and services without State consideration and coordination. It also complicates the process by which the Commonwealth attempts to maintain an accurate inventory.

The other interpretation is once funding enters the Commonwealth, it then becomes Virginia money. As such, any programs or services purchased with these funds should go through the contract approval process.

The need is present for a clear-cut set of guidelines under which all agencies/institutions must operate. With this is the need to circulate it to all agencies with an explanation of what will be required and why.

One of Virginia's major weaknesses resulting in not using the available technologies to their fullest potential, has been a lack of information rather than an absence of technology. Virginia has motion picture production facilities, videotape facilities and audio capabilities at most of the colleges and community colleges in addition to some State agencies (e.g., Department of Education, the Virginia Museum and the Department of Mental Health). The trend seems to be either toward in-house production

or commercial production. Other than that, there is little agency to agency production or contact with the public broadcasters--with the exception of the ITV contracts.

The majority of contracting has, in the past, been for public service announcements and instructional programming. Other services which are sought are advertising campaigns, slide and film production, scripts and the services of ITFS and CATV.

In addition to the lack of knowledge about what facilities exist, there is a lack in knowledge of the potential uses each technology has to offer. For example, there are numerous FM stations with the potential for SCA use. With the exceptions of Virginia Voice and CenTeX, little has been done with this source of information. SCA also has potential for instructional purposes, as a means of communication from one government office to another, and for training purposes.

Telemedia technologies can be used to save the Commonwealth money. To do this effectively it will be necessary to inform those who could be dealing with it what is available, where it is available and the different possible uses the technology holds.

In our research, we uncovered several other states using telemedia technology in innovative ways. A brief survey of telemedia use in other states will serve to demonstrate some of the potential that could be tapped by Virginia.

1. The Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting has within its operation a telecommunications office. This office serves as a reference point for any group who needs advice in the telecommunications area and has aided in the coordination of several projects to test advances made in the telecommunications field.

2. Combining computer and two-way CATV technology, a home safety and security system has been developed in one state. It provides a means to monitor homes for intrusion, fire, and medical alert.

3. Potential exists for the development of a statewide video support system to be used for the training of emergency fire and rescue personnel. Though not statewide in scope, systems of this nature are in use in Denver, Colorado, using a closed circuit cable system; Rockford, Illinois, with a two-way cable system; and Jacksonville, Florida, using a video cassette system.

4. Satellite has been demonstrated to be effective in connecting the mayors and cabinets of Baltimore, Maryland, and Columbus, Ohio. During the meeting which was linked by the US Canadian Communications Technology Satellite (CTS), these two governing bodies discussed problems of mutual concern such as urban development and communications.

5. Hawaii identified several applications available with existing technology. While the functions are not always available, the potential for this development is imminent and the technologies with which to make these applications available exist:

	Function	Availability
a.	two-way video	limited
b.	single function video information	limited
c.	video conferencing	limited
d.	home information/educational terminal	developing
e.	videophone	limited
f.	interactive tele-education	developing

Summary

State agency uses of telemedia technology is limited. Only some agencies use the available technologies; most of these for public service announcements and for training purposes.

No one is coordinating the promotion of telemedia use, although VPTC is involved with some agencies in technical assistance and advice.

Given the experience elsewhere and the emergence of newer technologies, it seems appropriate that State agencies make more application of telemedia technology to their information transfer needs as well as for their service delivery systems.